

Tashkent

shash means "six" in Sanskrit, and therefore Shashkent had the same meaning as the Greek Hexapolis. Probably Tashkent developed in ancient times with the five other towns in the Scythian wastes on the right bank of the Syr-Darya, which later bore the names Turkestan, Auliye-Ata, Chimkent, Otrar and Sauran, of which the last two are long since in ruins, forming a league of six towns, and as the capital of the league it had the name of 'City of Six'. Such word formations, which are known to have been employed often by the ancient Greeks, are still in use in Turkestan today. Thus, for example, the realm founded by Yakub Beg in the Tarym Basin which was originally designated as Alty-Shaar (City of Six), had the name of Djety-Shaar (City of Seven) after Yakub Beg incorporated a seventh city, Kara-Shaar, into his dominion. The later Turkic invaders, for whom the word Shashkent, a foreign word, was incomprehensible, probably changed it, because of its similar sound into Tashkent, which means in their language (city of stone). In similar manner they also changed the name Baktra into Balkh or "capital", the name Chashmkent (well city) into Chimkent or (turf city), and the like. The second /151/ /Figure 48. Caption: Loess landscape near Tashkent Bridge over the Chirchik river between Tashkent and Chimgan. (After a photograph by G. Merzbacher.)/ syllable, kent, although it was Indo-European, was /152/ left unchanged by the Turkic peoples because they were already accustomed to it; for many other city names in Turkestan had the same formation, such as Kokand, Samarkand, Chimkent, Pskent, Yarkand, etc. 'kand' and 'kent' have the same meaning; the form 'kand' is used when the preceding syllable contains the vowels a, o or u, otherwise it is 'kent'. Thus in our case the correct orthography would be Tashkand, which is also the way the natives pronounce it. The Russians, however, who had little familiarity with linguistics, adopted the form Tashkent from the beginning, and this is now the official name of the town.

3. The Situation of the Town of Tashkent

Tashkent is situated $4^{\circ} 37' 11''$ east of Greenwich on a latitude of $41^{\circ} 19' 32''$ N. lat.; thus it lies approximately on the parallel of Naples; it is 488 meters above sea level. The coordinates correspond to the observatory of Tashkent, which is one kilometer east of the former city wall.

000 and American representatives in the capital, Urumchi. In the sands of Khotan in the Tarim basin the great archaeologist, Aurel Stein, discovered the lost cities that made his name. Since his time a succession of travellers have made it their business to describe what they were able to learn of the tangled politics of the Tarim and Jungarian oases from the time of the fall of the Manchus up to the rise to power of Communism in China. Only then, some three years back, did Sinkiang become inaccessible to the West. Before then it shared with the more remote parts of the Himalayas the distinction of being the favourite goal of the more enterprising travellers in Asiatic lands. Some may think that for that reason it has attained a quite spurious importance.

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With Russian Turkistan — now become the five Socialist Soviet Republics of Central Asia — the case is otherwise. The Eastern Turks of the Oxus region have always dwelt in a strange isolation, and the Russians have only drawn closer the veils which for centuries shrouded a forbidden land. Relatively to the size of the country and the antiquity of its history, it is true to say that the West knows less of Soviet Central Asia than of any part of the civilized world. In extent alone it is impressive. Including the steppe up to the northern limits of modern Kazakhstan, the aggregate territory is larger in area than India before partition¹ and more than half the size of the United States; and, although in a land of which much is desert the population in 1939 was under seventeen million,¹

	Area	Population (last census)	
		Total	'Native'
	(sq. miles)		
Kazakhstan	1,073,000	6,146,000	3,090,000
Uzbekistan	158,000	6,282,000	4,980,000
Tajikistan	56,000	1,485,000	1,230,000
Kirghizia	77,000	1,459,000	880,000
Turkmenia	189,000	1,254,000	830,000
Total	1,553,000	16,626,000	11,000,000

Note that the 'Native' population figures given are the figures of Kazaks, Uzbeks etc., for the whole USSR. The 1939 census, unlike that for 1926, did not give figures by nationality separately for each republic. But, although there is some inter-

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that figure greatly outstrips such important countries as Canada or Australia. It is, moreover, an organized population in tightly packed groups, gathered either on patches of intensive cultivation to which water can be brought, or in urban centres where the new industry flourishes. Yet it is strange to compare the extent of modern Western knowledge of these peoples with that which has been gathered about Afghanistan or Persia, to both of which Turkistan is immediately adjacent. With Pakistan or India, the comparison is more startling still.

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The isolation of the great Turanian basin between the Caspian and the Tianshan becomes all the more remarkable when it is realized that these lands were once the springboard of the Turkish race, and were also the seat of a renowned Muslim civilization which in its time rivalled the civilizations of Baghdad, Damascus and Cordova. From the date of the Arab conquest late in the VIIth century Maveraunnahr, or Transoxiana, became a part of the Muslim East. Today it never figures in the many definitions of that region, but it is time to claim it as the marginal overlap, both geographical and cultural, between the continental system of Russia and a Turco-Iranian system of South-Western Asia, in which at one time it played an important part.

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In regions of overlap there will be stresses; Poland, Alsace, the North-West Frontier come to mind. Those stresses will be greater if, as in this case, the peoples inhabiting the region of overlap are alien to the Power to which they are for the time being subject and akin to their neighbours on the other side. In this instance too the overlap is adjacent to a frontier south of which lie the vast populations of the Indian sub-continent and the resources of the Middle East. Remembering this, it is not difficult to understand how Russia has come to determine on a policy of steady assimilation. Under the Russians, more particularly when the Soviets succeeded to the Tsars, the people of Turkistan have for this reason mingling of nationalities as between the five republics, the figures are near enough. The difference between the two sets of population figures is due mainly to Russian immigration, which in Kazakhstan accounts for approximately half the total population.

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133 river's flow. Both Kashka and Zarafshan sink into the sand before reaching the Amu Darya. North of the Sir Darya and the Kara Tav prolongation of the Tien Shan comes the real steppe, much of it half-desert and known as the Betpak Dala (Plain of Misfortune) but part of it watered by yet other rivers, the Talash and the Chu. The Chu possibly at one time drained Lake Issik K  l, but now it passes some miles from it and down the Bum gorge into the plain. Like the Zarafshan, both these northern rivers sink into the sand.

133 Up to this point, going northward and eastward, the watershed has been broadly coincident with the frontier between China and the Russian Empire, and the basins of the two great rivers lie wholly in Russian territory. But to the north-east of the Betpak Dala lies Lake Balkhash with Yedisu (in Russian, Semirechye, the Land of the Seven Rivers) to the east of it. The main affluent to this basin is the River Ili, flowing past Kulja out of Sinkiang. Occupied by the Tsar's forces in 1876 during Yakub Beg's period of rule in Kashgharia, Kulja was surrendered to the Manchu Empire on the resumption of Chinese control a few years later, and since then has been beyond the formal frontier of Russia.¹ As things are, this part of the Russian frontier has no mountain-screen. It lies open not only to an approach down the Ili Valley, but through the gaps in the lower hills which connect the Tien Shan with the Altai farther north. These are the passages leading to Jungaria, along which the tides of conquest, and later the trade-routes, moved westward and eastward under Chingiz and Timur. They are known as the gap of Chuguchak, the Jungarian Gate and the Iron Gate (or Talki Pass), and the Ili River Valley itself. Together they offer an easier entrance than the passes farther south from Kashghar into Farghana by Irkishtam, the most practicable of which, the Terek Davan, rises to 13,000 feet.

ooo It is in the mountains above the Ili Valley that we find

¹ For the reality as between Russian and Chinese control on this frontier, even in the period between the Great Wars, see Fitzroy Maclean, *op. cit.* Since then the advent to power of the Mao regime in China, for the time at least, has further deprived this frontier of its meaning.

175 be free of Russian interference and so act as an effective buffer to their empire in India. A bargain between two equal sides was concluded by diplomacy, and the balance swung to rest. The final agreement, signed in July 1887, still left Balkh, inhabited by people of Turkish stock, and most of Badakhshan, inhabited mainly by Tajiks, to Afghanistan.

175 There now remained only a small mountain area never
 131 penetrated by Turkish peoples. This was the high table-land of the Pamirs east of the Bukhara mountain country, hitherto a no-man's-land too distant for effective management by the Mangit Emirs of Bukhara and beyond the limits attained either by the Manchus working from Sinkiang or by the British from the Panjab. This remote region also finally fell to Russia, a narrow tongue of Afghanistan known as Wakhan being left as a cartographical buffer—it is little else—between the limits of British expansion in Gilgit and Chitral and Russian expansion on the Pamirs. Many writers have left the impression that there exists a point in this region where met 'the frontiers of three empires', namely, Russia, China, India¹ and indeed a fourth, Afghanistan. This was never the case. The Russian and Indian empires were parted by the finger of Wakhan, the Russian frontier having been so demarcated by a joint Anglo-Russian commission in the summer of 1895, rounding off the Russian dominion towards India but in this sector as elsewhere leaving Afghan territory in between. At one point the Wakhan tongue is only eight miles wide. Here, however, it is buttressed on the Pakistan side by the massive chain of the Hindu Kush, which in Tirich Mir rises to 25,000 ft. At another point farther east is an easy 12,000 ft. pass, the Baroghil, leading from northern Chitral into Wakhan, whence it is possible to look straight across on to Russian territory on the Pamirs. The Russian territory north of Wakhan is now known as Gorno-Badakhshan, or Hill Badakhshan, and is inhabited by Tajiks and pockets of odd mountain peoples, like their neighbours in Gilgit and Chitral not of Turkish stock and often, it may be, followers of the Agha Khan. Now Pakistan, which succeeded to the hegemony of Chitral and controls the Gilgit passes north of Kashmir.

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as Kazakistan, but still as an ASSR within the RSFSR. 642
Similarly, Kirghizia in its mountains became a second ASSR 631
within the RSFSR. Thus by 1926 the name of Turkistan
had ceased to exist, and the shape of the new map had begun
to emerge. There were already the five republics of today, but
two of them only, Uzbekistan and Turkmenia, had full con-
stituent status. Of the other three, Kazakistan and Kirghizia
remained ASSRs as part of the RSFSR, while Tajikistan had
a similar standing as part of Uzbekistan. Of these three,
Tajikistan alone rose to full constituent status as an SSR a few
years later, in 1929.

Since then there has only been one significant constitutional
development, and several adjustments of boundaries. The
point of significance is that it took the eleven years until 1936
for Kazakistan and Kirghizia to qualify for full constituent
status. The story of the disasters which accompanied this
process belongs rather to the period of collectivization, to
which we must turn later. Here it is enough to say that, apart
from the fact that about one-third of the peasantry, in Kazaki-
stan at least, was already Russian and therefore preferred to be
included in the Russian State, the Soviets experienced the
greatest difficulty in subjecting the nomads of the steppe and
the mountains to any system which bore the stamp of Com-
munist principle or practice. Dictatorial régimes have a tradi-
tional dislike of nomadism, which is hard to organize and
eludes the tax-gatherer. Eleven years had to pass with devas-
tating loss of human and animal life before the authorities could
proceed to complete the pattern and bring Kazakistan and Kir-
ghizia into line with the older republics as constituent SSRs.

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A few minor boundary adjustments were made. What is 131 ●
now the Karakalpak ASSR with capital at Nukus was a slice 631
of territory along the lower Amu Darya once part of Kazaki-
stan and later transferred to Uzbekistan. It is possible that
the setting up of this autonomous area was a belated Soviet

131 admission of the justice of Barthold's criticism of the annihilation of Khorezm. (Khorezm was really the settled area, while the Karakalpaks are in the main a steppe tribe, but the areas overlap.) And in 1929 there were adjustments between the Uzbek and the Tajik country, in particular the transfer of the lower part of the Farghana Valley — that part around Khojent (now Leninabad) inhabited mainly by Tajiks — from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan. The upper part of the valley, east of Andijan, is in Kirghizia, and a glance at the map reveals a strange interlacing of the inter-republican boundaries in this part of Central Asia.

131 Let us pursue this geography a little further, for on these
312 administrative divisions the Kremlin relied to a large extent in support of its claim to be a respecter of nations. The official thesis was that the boundaries were drawn in accord with national principle, but not in such a way as to clash with economic divisions. It was stated, for instance, that each irrigation system was included as a rule in one republic.¹ There is Stalin's own verdict as guide.

I think the recent delimitation of national frontiers in Turkistan may be regarded as an excellent example of how the Soviets can be brought into closer touch with the masses. . . . In a pre-revolutionary era these countries were torn into fragments and were a convenient field for the exploitative machinations of the powers that be. The time is now come when these scattered fragments can be reunited into independent states, so that the toiling masses can be welded with the organs of government.²

[162] The map itself belies him, for the boundaries are confused and the territories twirled and twisted round each other like the spokes of a catherine wheel. It is not even true that the boundaries divide the language-stocks, the 1926 census showing considerable minorities of Uzbeks in Tajikistan and Kirghizia, of Kirghiz in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and of Tajiks in Uzbekistan and Kirghizia. Indeed, as history shows, Uzbeks and Tajiks in particular are inextricably mingled in all these parts of Turkistan. Turning to irrigation, we note that the

¹ Mikhailov, Bib. I, 72.

² Bib. I, 90, p. 209.

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~~turning to irrigation, we note that~~
Sir Darya starts in Kirghizia, passes into Uzbekistan, thence ¹³¹
into Tajikistan, thence again into another part of Uzbekistan, ³¹²
and finally runs out into Kazakistan. The Amu Darya too ¹³³
starts in Tajikistan, passes along the short southern side of
Uzbekistan, thence flowing into Turkmenia, pursues a course
close to the Uzbek boundary until it re-enters Uzbekistan in
the Khiva region, only to touch Turkmenia once more at
Takhya Tash opposite Nukus, and finally to flow back into
Uzbekistan again. In both cases the irrigation canals often
have to cross what on the original Soviet showing were
nothing short of national frontiers between independent units
of a federal State, and it is not easy to uphold the claim that
the irrigation systems have been kept within single adminis-
trative units. The difficulty of organizing irrigation across ⁰⁰⁰
a real administrative frontier is obvious to anybody who
possesses experience, for there is no administrative question
which leads to so much disagreement and disharmony as the
disposal of competing claims to irrigation waters from the
same canal or from different canals on the same river. Assum-
ing for the sake of argument the official Soviet theory that
these republics are real sovereign autonomous units in a
federal structure, it would be impossible for them, situated as
they are up and down the same rivers, to reach the necessary
agreements for the season-to-season, week-to-week, and even
day-to-day distribution of water, without which an irrigation
system does not work. The conclusion is irresistible that one
reason for so drawing these boundaries was to compel a degree
of central direction which makes nonsense of a real autonomy.
Or we may say if we like that it did not matter how the
boundaries were drawn, for the administration of all essential
matters would be in central hands. In either case their only
meaning would be to divide artificially stretches of territory like
the Farghana or Khorezm oases, each of which has a natural
geographical and agricultural unity. The best that can be said
for them is that the convolutions look pretty on the map.

There is another curious feature of political geography in ¹³¹
Soviet Central Asia. The five capitals are — of the Kazaks ³⁶¹

- 13/ Alma Ata, of the Kirghiz Frunze (Pishpek), of the Uzbeks
36/ Tashkent, of the Tajiks Stalinabad (Dushambe), of the Turkmens Ashkabad. All these five are on the extreme edge of each territory, the first four of them remarkably close to one another in relation to the great area of the country as a whole. Road communications, though not rail, from Tashkent to Alma Ata go through Frunze. The position of Alma Ata on the edge of the huge Kazak republic is particularly strange, and not altogether explicable by the fact that here are grown the largest apples in the world. It is hard to interpret this tendency, unless the location of the capitals has been fixed with a view to grouping all of them close to Tashkent as the local focus of the central authority. The fifth, Ashkabad, presides over a republic in its origins and history even in recent times turning more towards Azerbaijan and the Caucasus than to Central Asia, and it may be that it looks to Baku as its Capua rather than toward Tashkent.

○○○ I do not suggest that there are no grounds for drawing
[101] linguistic boundaries in Turkistan; indeed its whole history shows at least four main historical groupings, the Kazaks of the steppe, the Turkmens along the Persian frontier, the Uzbeks of Transoxiana, Farghana and Khorezm, and the Tajik remnant of the original Iranian population. Moreover, as Barthold observes, both Bukhara and Khorezm had a history of a long viability, while the Kirghiz are in many ways distinct from both the Kazak and the Uzbek tradition. But, in spite of the differences, there was also some real underlying pattern — a unity of spirit and tradition — or it would have been impossible for men like Togan, or Khan Junaid of Khiva, to have ridden the whole land from end to end and won support. Togan makes the point that the Russian object was first, under a cloak of separate race-consciousness, to break down and weaken the natural ties joining the limbs of Turkistan, and then to bring each severed part not into relation with the other parts but into subjection to the outside force, Russia. To serve that end division and subdivision was carried to absurdities. A minority nationalism becomes ridiculous if it

Turkestan

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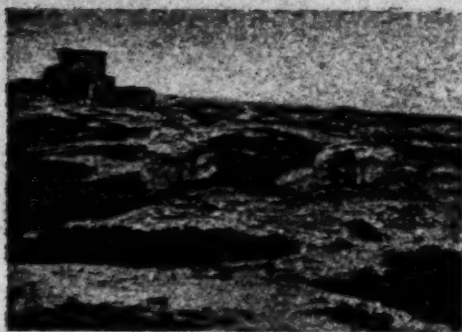
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The neighbouring countries of Eastern and Western Turkestan, situated in the heart of Central Asia and separated from each other by the Tien Shan mountains, have little more in common than the name, which points to the fact that the country is peopled by Turkish tribes. Because of its extreme barrenness, which makes permanent settlement exceedingly difficult, and its commercially favourable situation between the vast territory of China and the ancient civilizations of Western Asia, Eastern Turkestan is essentially a transit country. In striking contrast to this desert land stands Western Turkestan, which has seen so many influxes of wandering tribes, so many invasions and different settlers, that it is in every respect one of the most interesting countries in the world.

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The great differences existing between the two countries is best shown by the differences in the density of the population, which depends on the number of people which a country can feed. Western Turkestan (Russian Turkestan) has an extent of about 770,000 square miles, and is inhabited by about 9 million people. Thus the average population per square mile amounts to only 11.5, a fact which shows that large tracts of the country are uninhabitable deserts, and that on the whole it is sparsely populated. Compared with Eastern Turkestan, where only 1 1/2 million people inhabit 386,000 square miles, it is, however, a veritable paradise. Eastern Turkestan is one of the most thinly populated countries in the world.



Aras in Turkmenistan. This was a flourishing town in the 17th century, but is now a ruin, since its water supply was cut off during a war.

133 time the country was so barren that it was firmly believed to be inhabited only by ghosts.

101 By comparison with this desert area Western Turkestan is a rich country. It has at all

131 times been of cultural importance, and sometimes of very great importance indeed. At the

[62] present day it is divided into the four republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kasakistan, which are incorporated into

Soviet Russia. The territory stretches northward to the Aral Sea, in the West it is bordered by the Caspian Sea, in the South by Persia and Afghanistan, and to the East, as already stated, it abuts on Sinkiang, the westernmost province of China. Western Turkestan, too, is a land of

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CHAPTER 17

Central Asia

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SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA extends from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Chinese frontier in the east, from Kazakhstan in the north to the borders of Iran and Afghanistan in the south. This region, which has some of the most unusual features of the natural divisions of the USSR, has an area of about 475,000 square miles. It is located farthest south and most removed from the tempering influence of the oceans.

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The structure and relief of Central Asia can be divided into two parts: the northwestern section, comprising about two thirds of the total area, which includes extensive low, sandy deserts and irrigated oases in the foothills of the mountains, and the southeastern part, one third of the total area, a mountainous zone with some of the longest, highest, and most glaciated ranges of the world. The low region is part of the Turan lowland. It stretches from the Caspian Sea to the Syr Darya and the range Kara-Tau in the east and includes the southern portion of the Ust'-Urt plateau and the two largest deserts of Central Asia, the Kara-Kum and the Kyzyl-Kum, separated from each other by the Amu Darya. The Kara-Kum has the greater area, of which nine tenths are covered by sand. Here and there one encounters barren clay flats and salt-covered depressions. A number of dry river beds, similar to the wadi of the Sahara, run from the present river course toward the Caspian Sea. The largest of these dry valleys is the Uzboy, which is thought to have been a branch of the Amu Darya. Along the southern edge of the Kara-Kum, at the foot of the Kopet Dag, are steppes and oases extending in a narrow belt along the USSR-Iran frontier. Other oases lie on the Tedzhen and Murghab rivers, as well as in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya (oasis of Khorezm). The Kyzyl-Kum lies somewhat higher than the Kara-Kum and has more rocky areas, devoid of sand cover. In its central section there are outcrops of Paleozoic rocks, rising to over 3,000 feet, which are the eroded and weathered remains of ancient mountain ranges. In the eastern part of the Kyzyl-Kum numerous steppe areas penetrate be-